


● ● ● End of the Cold War, 1985-91



● ● ● Mikhail Gorbachev

- Became the general secretary of the Soviet Union's Communist party in 1985.
- He began a process of reforming the Communist system at home and modifying its dealings with foreign powers.
- Once begun, the reforms assumed a momentum of their own, sometimes exceeding Gorbachev's intentions.



● ● ● Gorbachev's Three Crises, 1988-91: Nationalities Crisis

- Soviet Union was made up of over 100 ethnic nationalities that had been tied together by state repression and kept under the control of the Russians.
- The Soviet Baltic Republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania insisted on complete independence in 1990-91.
- Increasingly, other republics began pushing for national autonomy, including the huge Russian Republic (RSFSR), which declared itself sovereign in 1990.

● ● ● Gorbachev's Three Crises, 1988-91: Political Crisis

- Gorbachev had always battled against conservative forces within the Communist Party that feared change.
- By the late 1980s, Gorbachev also faced criticism from those who thought he was not enough of a reformer.
- One critic was Boris Yeltsin who was elected as the leader of Russia.
- Gorbachev bowed to pressure and agreed to a multiparty system in 1990.

● ● ● Domestic Reforms, 1985-89

- Glasnost (openness)
  - Wanted more freedom of expression and less censorship and government secrecy
  - Many dissidents were released from prison
  - Writers could criticize government
  - Forbidden films, plays, and books were allowed
  - Permission to emigrate and travel abroad
  - Government tolerated demonstrations, strikes, and religious beliefs


● ● ● Domestic Reforms, 1985-89

- Perestroika (restructuring)
  - Primarily economic reforms designed to rebuild the struggling economy
  - Problems:
    - Deficient Agricultural production: Had to import Western grain despite having more farmers
    - High defense expenditures
    - Lack of technology (personal computers in 1988: tens of thousand; U.S.: 20 million)

● ● ● Gorbachev's Three Crises, 1988-91: Economic Crisis

- By the late 1980s, the Soviet economy was in a tailspin because of the difficulties associated with transforming the old planned economy.
- Food supplies and consumer goods declined while inflation and unemployment increased.
- When Gorbachev enacted currency reform and price increases in 1991, his popularity fell to an all-time low.

● ● ● Ronald Reagan



- By the time Gorbachev took power in 1985, Ronald Reagan's "Peace through Strength" program had largely succeeded.
- It was clear to Gorbachev that the Soviet economy could not continue to keep pace with U.S. defense spending. The arms race was just too expensive for the stagnant Soviet economy.
- After his reelection in 1984, Reagan began making efforts to ease U.S.-Soviet tensions.

● ● ● Domestic Reforms, 1985-89

- Reduced centralized control of the economy
  - In 1985-87 the government began allowing some private alternatives to state enterprises. (ex. Restaurants)
  - Foreign businesses were allowed to sign commercial agreements (ex. Pizza Hut)
- Gorbachev wanted to increase both worker productivity and quality control and to restructure prices and salaries to reflect real market values.


● ● ● Domestic Reforms, 1985-89

- Democratization (democratization)
  - Increased participation of Soviet citizens in the political process
    - Efforts to reduce the role of the Communist Party
    - Secret-ballot, multiple-candidate (although not multiparty) elections, term limits (10 years) for public officials
  - Gorbachev believed he could reform the Soviet system without destroying it.


● ● ● Gorbachev and Foreign Policy

- Gorbachev called his foreign policy "new thinking"
- He renounced "ideological struggle"
- By the end of 1988 Gorbachev had met with Reagan on 5 occasions in 3 years, producing limitations on arms and improved U.S.-Soviet relations.
  - Geneva Summit (1985)
    - Reagan and Gorbachev met and signed several cultural and scientific agreements and promised arms limitation talks.
  - INF Treaty (1987)
    - A treaty to eliminate intermediate-range nuclear forces.
    - First step toward the eventual end of the arms race.

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● ● ● George H. W. Bush



- Bush and Gorbachev continued summit diplomacy and disarmament talks after Bush's election in 1988.
- The two leaders quickly became involved in a "disarmament race," as the two leaders began to reduce arms.
- At their meeting at the Malta summit (Dec. 2-3, 1989) Bush and Gorbachev agreed that they were no longer enemies.


● ● ● Eastern Europe

- Gorbachev stressed Soviet links to Western Europe in what he called our "common home"
  - Gorbachev's domestic reforms in the Soviet Union encouraged political reforms throughout Eastern Europe.
- Gorbachev did not intervene because any intervention would damage his efforts at reform at home and his relations with the West.
  - Economic stagnation in the Soviet bloc and a costly arms race appeared to him more threatening to Soviet security than Eastern Europe political reforms.

● ● ● August Coup, 1991

- Fearing the disintegration of the Soviet Union, conservative leaders placed Gorbachev under house-arrest and took control of the government.
- Foreign pressure from George Bush and domestic demonstrations by Boris Yeltsin led to the failure of the coup attempt as Gorbachev was released.
- It created an immediate backlash against the Communist part and Gorbachev resigned as its general secretary.

● ● ● The Collapse of the U.S.S.R.



- On December 8, 1991, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus agreed to disband the union and instead form the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). They then phoned George Bush and received his approval.
- On December 21, eight other republics joined the CIS.
- Now a president without a country, Gorbachev resigned his office on December 25, 1991.

● ● ● Revolutions of 1989

- 1989 brought an end to the Communist domination of Eastern Europe that had lasted for over 40 years.
- Soviet troops would not be used to prop up Communist governments.
  - Soviet troops left Afghanistan in 1989.
  - Gorbachev repudiated the "Brezhnev Doctrine"
- By the end of 1989 old-line Communist leaders had been replaced throughout the former Eastern European bloc nations in a revolution that had very little violence.
  - Communist party rule ended in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania.

● ● ● The Reunification of Germany


- The Berlin Wall, which had stood as a symbol of the Cold War, fell on November 9, 1989
- Helmut Kohl, who had been the Chancellor of West Germany, became the head of a reunified Germany in October 1990.



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● ● ● Iron Curtain dissolves

- The Warsaw Pact dissolved in 1991 and Soviet troops began leaving Eastern Europe.
- NATO remained; however, the U.S. promised to make it more of a political alliance, not strictly a military alliance

● ● ● Gorbachev Criticized at Home

- By 1991 Gorbachev was admired far more abroad than at home.
- His domestic economic policies seemed to only worsen conditions.
- As Yeltsin and other leaders of national republics criticized Gorbachev, he finally gave ground and agreed to a new compromise union treaty, officially transferring many powers to the republics.